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FM AMEMBASSY HARARE

TO RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 5023
INFO RUCNSAD/SOUTHERN AF DEVELOPMENT COMMUNITY COLLECTIVE
RUEHAR/AMEMBASSY ACCRA 3089
RUEHDS/AMEMBASSY ADDIS ABABA 3201
RUEHRL/AMEMBASSY BERLIN 1630
RUEHBY/AMEMBASSY CANBERRA 2464
RUEHDK/AMEMBASSY DAKAR 2833
RUEHKM/AMEMBASSY KAMPALA 3249
RUEHNR/AMEMBASSY NAIROBI 5696
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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 HARARE 000826

SIPDIS

AF/S FOR B.WALCH
DRL FOR N. WILETT
ADDIS ABABA FOR USAU
ADDIS ABABA FOR ACSS
STATE PASS TO USAID FOR J. HARMON AND L. DOBBINS

E.O. 12958: DECL: 06/17/2019
TAGS: PREL PGOV PHUM ASEC ZI
SUBJECT: MDC TO DISENGAGE FROM ZANU-PF, BUT REMAIN IN
GOVERNMENT

REF: HARARE 736

Classified By: CDA Donald Petterson for reason 1.4 (d)

SUMMARY

¶1. (C) Precipitated by the re-arrest of Roy Bennett, the MDC has taken a decision to disengage from ZANU-PF, while remaining in government. This means it will continue to head ministries and participate in the process to draft a new constitution, but will not attend meetings of the Cabinet and Council of Ministers with ZANU-PF. Prime Minister Morgan Tsvangirai will attempt to meet with South African president Jacob Zuma as well as with other SADC Troika representatives to exert pressure on President Robert Mugabe to resolve outstanding Global Political Agreement (GPA) issues. While the MDC's public position will be that reengagement is dependent on resolution of all issues, a compromise is likely. END SUMMARY.

¶2. (U) MDC treasurer and deputy minister of agriculture designate Roy Bennett was rearrested yesterday after prosecutors elected to indict him and try him in the High Court rather than try him in the lower Magistrates' Court. (NOTE: Bennett returned to Zimbabwe from exile in South Africa in January 2009. After being designated as deputy minister of agriculture in the new government on February 10, Bennett was arrested on February 13 and charged with treason. He was released on bail on March 12. His trial in the Magistrates' Court was to have begun on October 13. END NOTE.)

¶3. (SBU) In reaction to Bennett's rearrest, and Mugabe's refusal yesterday to discuss Bennett with Tsvangirai, the MDC Standing Committee (about 10 top MDC officials, including Tsvangirai) met today and resolved to disengage from ZANU-PF until GPA outstanding issues are resolved. The MDC Executive Committee (about 50 individuals) will meet tomorrow to ratify the decision. (The party appears solidly behind Tsvangirai.)

Tsvangirai will subsequently give a press conference and diplomatic briefing.

¶4. (C) We spoke today with Elton Mangoma, Minister of Economic Development and part of Tsvangirai's inner circle, who attended the Standing Committee meeting. Mangoma said that Bennett's arrest provided an "entry point" to address outstanding issues, noting that beginning with Tsvangirai's address to the MDC's 10th anniversary celebration in Bulawayo on September 13, the MDC had begun ratcheting up the pressure on ZANU-PF and Mugabe (Ref). He identified the outstanding issues as the appointments of Reserve Bank of Zimbabwe governor Gideon Gono and Attorney General Johannes Tomana, the appointments of governors, and the swearing-in of Bennett as Deputy Minister of Agriculture. According to Mangoma, Tsvangirai would attempt to meet soon with the leaders of the SADC Organ on Defence, Politics, and Security; presidents Zuma of South Africa, Guebuza of Mozambique, and Dos Santos of Angola; to attempt to create pressure on Mugabe and ZANU-PF. (NOTE: Tsvangirai is canceling visits to Finland and to Sweden for European Development Days to focus on the Qand to Sweden for European Development Days to focus on the GPA. END NOTE.)

¶5. (C) Mangoma emphasized that the MDC was disengaging from ZANU-PF and not the government. This means that the MDC will not participate in meetings of the Cabinet or Council of Ministers attended by ZANU-PF. It will continue to run its ministries and will continue to participate in the constitutional process to draft a new constitution. Mangoma told us that although the MDC's public position would be that

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resolution of all outstanding issue was necessary for reengagement, compromise was inevitable. The MDC had not yet discussed internally which issues it would be willing to give on. Mangoma was confident that the present impasse would soon be resolved.

COMMENT

¶6. (C) Neither ZANU-PF nor SADC respond to the MDC unless there is a crisis. The MDC has used Bennett's rearrest to manufacture one. The result is likely to be some incremental progress. The MDC will not leave government and will continue on the bumpy road to a constitution and elections.
END COMMENT.

PETTERSON